

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

One way to increase your chances to win the Civil Service job you want is to develop strong statements that identify the qualifications you have that are related to the "Ranking Factors" listed on the announcements of civil service vacancies.

When you apply, your application is reviewed first to see if you meet the Qualification Requirements (The Office of Personnel Management Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions). If you do, your application is then further evaluated to determine the extent to which your description of your education, experience, training, awards and supervisory appraisals indicate that you have the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) listed on the vacancy announcement.

Although you should demonstrate that you have the required knowledge, skills and abilities in your application (Standard Form 171, Application for Employment, OF-612, Optional Application for Federal Employment, or a Federal Resume), it is good practice to write and submit independent statements documenting the extent to which you possess the KSAs listed in the announcement.

As you begin to draft your statements it may be helpful to note that Ranking Factors that focus on skills and abilities are often generic and are used in a variety of situations:

- ability to communicate in writing
- ability to make oral presentations
- skill in using office automation software

Ranking factors that focus on **knowledge** are frequently specific to a family of jobs:

- knowledge of Federal Personnel Regulations
- knowledge of government procurement policies
- knowledge of OPEC trade practices

To improve your KSA statements you need to focus your attention on both content and format.

In drafting the content of your statements you should consider including:

1. A Summary Statement:

Three or four lines summarizing your qualifications with respect to the ranking factor.

2. A List of Specific Accomplishments

Use effective accomplishment statement techniques. Do not assume that the reader will know anything about your previous jobs. Begin each brief, bulleted statement with one or more strong active verbs that document achievements pertinent to the ranking factor. Select verbs suggested by the text of the announcement. If possible, present accomplishments that are recent, related to the job you seek and present you as a success. Indicate the job where the accomplishment took place and provide enough details so that the readers can sense the size, scope, complexity, significance or difficulty of the accomplishment. Be sure to identify the results you achieved. Job-based accomplishments should be drawn from positions included in your SF-171, OF-612 or resume. Don't forget to mention accomplishments resulting from unusual events such as details or internships, TDYs, or task force or project assignments. Your accomplishments as a volunteer may be included if they relate to the KSA you are documenting. Remember to indicate the amount of time you devote to the activity. Include volunteer activities, if appropriate.

3. Information About Education and Training

Describe both classroom education and informal training that helped you gain the KSAs that you are writing about.

4. Recognition and Awards

When the KSAs you are writing about have won you praise in some form, tell about the award or commendation and why it was merited.

5. Other Information

Don't forget to include other information such as language skills, licenses and professional certifications that document your KSAs.

You can also increase the impact of your statements by the format you use.

- Remember that your application is a sample of your work. Demonstrate that you can write well, organize and present information and produce quality work that is neat and error free.
- Include your name, Social Security Number, the announcement number and job title on each page.
- Identify the Ranking Factor you are addressing by number and by restating the factor.
- Include, in most instances, only one or two factors per page.

- Select an easily read font, usually 12 point and use white space and spacing to make your information accessible to the reader. Present all text in short, easy to scan paragraphs. Headings, boldface, all capitals and underlining may be used with discretion to emphasize important information. (If you anticipate that your document will be processed by a scanner, be sure to request special instructions.)

An effective Ranking Factor Statement will be honest, will emphasize your strengths, will address the needs of the position and will represent you well.

EXAMPLE - Ranking Factor Statement

E.Z. Winner
SSN 123-45-6789

Announcement 12-3456
Personnel Assistant

Ranking Factor No. 1 - Ability to communicate orally.

Over five years of recent experience providing information, in person and over the telephone, about insurance benefits to both employees and organizations. Earlier experience included setting up appointments and speaking before groups as Vice President for Programs for a community organization.

- Respond, in present position, to 250 visits and telephone calls each week from employees seeking technical insurance plan information such as dates of enrollment, coverage and rights of appeal. Developed skills in explaining billing process to cope with angry customers. Rated as "Outstanding" on this duty for three consecutive years.
- Selected to serve as primary telephone contact between bureau and insurance carriers to research and report internal information needed by the firms to resolve complicated claims. Received letter of commendation from insurance firm for my "skill in responding to their requests for clarifying information".
- Worked as Receptionist for a medical practice of five doctors. Answered ten-line phone and scheduled, rescheduled and reconfirmed 800 appointments weekly.
- Elected and reelected to serve as Vice President for Programs for PTA. Researched biographic data and introduced speakers to monthly meeting groups of up to 200.

Completed two-day Customer Service Training program at Foreign Service Institute, 1997.

Selected to receive "On-the-Spot" award in 1997 for effective service to customers during unexpected loss of 50% of incoming telephone lines.